



Washington Watch

44TH DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA • WINTER 2008
REPRESENTATIVE KEN CALVERT

Dear Students:

After what I hope was a safe holiday season, you will embark on the last six months of your high school career—a very exciting time. Throughout your education, teachers have passed along knowledge that will be instrumental in your future lives, whether it be in college, the military, family life or straight into the workforce. Many of you may be anxious about taking that next step but I can assure you that the future is bright.

The overall American economy has continued steady growth and unemployment has remained low. This may not apply to you directly yet in some way, whether it through a family member or friend, the economy does impact your life.

As our economy continues to grow it is important to note that America and California are the leaders in technology, science, medicine and engineering. Our economy and future labor needs will center around an educated workforce to continue America's lead in the high-tech sector. Unfortunately scores in math and science have been declining as well as interest in these subjects. These are not easy subjects to study but I am hopeful that as you consider what to pursue after graduation you will keep yourselves open to the possibility of a career in a high-tech field. Our country needs your talent and expertise. You will play an instrumental role in maintaining the prosperity of America's economy.

In the recent months, I have had inquiries as to what exactly a congressional office can offer to constituents. In the past, Representatives and Senators did not have a staff or even an office. They would sit at a desk in a room with all the other Members of Congress (sound familiar?). Today the public can still see the exact place where Abraham Lincoln's and John Quincy Adams' desk were located in the Capitol. Unfortunately Congress is no longer able to have such a simple, straight-forward arrangement and now the Capitol complex has expanded to include six additional buildings for Members and their staff. This newsletter focuses on how a congressional office works and what services are available to the local community.

I hope you will find the issue enlightening and I welcome any input you may have. Please feel free to contact me through my website or at any of the locations below. Again, good luck on your final six months of high school – they will be memorable ones!

Sincerely,

Ken Calvert

Contact Representative Ken Calvert at one of the following addresses or through his website www.calvert.house.gov:

WASHINGTON, DC
2201 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: (202) 225-1986
Fax: (202) 225-2004

RIVERSIDE COUNTY
3400 Central Ave., Ste 200
Riverside, CA 92506
Phone: (909) 784-4300
Fax: (909) 784-5255

ORANGE COUNTY
26111 Antonio Pkwy, Ste 300
Las Flores, CA 92688
Phone: (949) 888-8498
Fax: (949) 888-8524

How a Congressional Office Works

When most people think of a congressional office, they generally think of their Member of Congress sitting at a big desk, possibly talking to constituents or to some of his or her aides. Although this may be true at any given time, a congressional office does much more.

First, every member of Congress has at least two offices – one at the Capitol in Washington, DC, and one or more in the district they represent. The functions of these offices are quite different. The Washington office primarily deals with legislative issues and the district office offers constituent services resolving issues between constituents and Federal Agencies. This service, also known as “casework”, could involve assisting seniors with Medicare benefits or veterans with disability pay.

Each member of Congress is appropriated a budget, the size of which correlates to the geographic size of the district and distance from Washington. That budget provides for expenses of the office such as personnel and rent. Although there is no required organization of the offices, the typical organization is as follows:

Washington DC, Office Staff

Chief of Staff – The Chief of Staff supervises the Representative’s entire office staff, both in Washington and the district. He or she is responsible for coordinating all legislative, communications, scheduling and casework activities and serves as the Representative’s chief advisor.

Scheduler – The Executive Assistant/Scheduler has a variety of functions including scheduling, keeping track of the office budget, management of staff and generally making sure that the Representative is making the best possible use of his time.

Legislative Director – The Legislative Director supervises the Representative’s legislative assistants and is responsible for keeping the Representative informed on all committee and floor activities and familiar with all current legislation. He or she also ensures that all constituent mail related to legislation is answered in an accurate and timely manner.

Communications Director – The Communications Director, also known as the press secretary, is responsible for all press related activities including interviews, production and editing of newsletters and speeches, and the maintenance of the website.

Legislative Assistants – Each legislative assistant (usually 3 to 4 in an office) are responsible for certain legislative issues and committee assignments. He or she helps keep

the Representative informed about current legislation, prepares him or her for committee hearings, answers constituent mail and drafts legislation.

Systems Administrator/Staff Assistant – The Systems Administrator logs in all mail and maintains the office computer systems. The Staff Assistant greets visitors, opens and distributes mail, answers phones, recruits and supervises interns and arranges tours for visiting constituents.

District Office Staff

District Director – The District Director supervises the district staff and keeps the Washington staff aware of all district issues. He or she attends meetings on behalf of the Representative and often times represents the Representative by giving a speech or presenting an award.

Deputy District Director – The Deputy District Director is responsible for overseeing all constituent requests for assistance, handling high-profile or multi-party casework, supervising the caseworkers, attending seminars hosted by federal agencies for information on current laws and regulations affecting constituents, and sharing this information with the caseworkers.

Caseworkers – One of the primary focuses of the district office is helping individuals having problems with the federal government – known as casework. This involves meeting with the individual constituents to determine the extent of their problem and contacting the appropriate federal agencies on the constituent’s behalf to determine how the problem can best be solved. A close working relationship with the federal agencies is essential for each caseworker to facilitate resolutions. One of the caseworkers may also be responsible for the Representative’s schedule when he or she is in their congressional district.

District Secretary – The first person you meet on a visit to the district office is usually the District Secretary. He or she greets visitors, maintains office equipment, conducts correspondence and is the congressional liaison to constituents for general information about tours in Washington, DC, flags flown over the Capitol, and legislative bills.

